

SUGGESTED CHANGES TO THE UMSU CONSTITUTION – MAY 2016

Summary and rationale document

The following suggestions for changes to the UMSU Constitution are some of those discussed and developed by the UMSU Constitutional Working Group in Semester 1, 2016. Meetings were open to all students and minutes are available on the UMSU website. Extensive work was also conducted by the UMSU Wom*n's Department, which established its own working group, and the People of Colour Collective (a collective of the UMSU Welfare Department).

Changes are listed in numerical order according to the section of the constitution in which they appear. Changes that appear in multiple sections are listed under the earliest section in which they appear.

James Bashford
General Secretary

1. Removing the asterisk from “Wom*n”

Found Under:

- Contents [p. iii]
- Definitions of “Collective”, “Committee”, “Officers” and “Wom*n’s Committee” [pp. 2-5]
- R. 52 (f) [p.16]
- R. 62 (i) [p.21]
- R. 71.2, 71.3, 72.2 [p.22]
- R. 72.3 [p.23]
- R. 78.1 (i) [p.24]
- R. 89 [p.27]
- R. 92.2 [p.29]
- R. 129.1 (a) [p.36]
- R. 130.1 [p. 37]
- R. 175.5 (a) [p.50]

Current:

*Wom*n*

Proposed:

Women

Rationale:

- Not indicative of the department as the use of * originated from second wave feminism, a highly politicised and largely exclusionary movement. The current spelling suggests that the UMSU Women’s Department aligns itself with such movement.
- Having a self-explanatory title would make the department more accessible and inclusive.

- Increased consistency as currently the department has to alternate between the * and using a Y.

2. Introducing a People of Colour Department

Current:

There is currently no department representing students of colour, nor any mention of students or people of colour in the constitution.

Proposed:

- Definitions [pp. 2-5]:
 - “Collective” – addition of “*people of colour collective*”
 - “Committee” – addition of “*people of colour committee*”
 - “Officers” - addition of “*people of colour officer*”
 - “Restricted constituencies” – addition of “*students of colour*”
 - “People of Colour” – new definition: “**People of Colour** means people who identify as people of colour due to their African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Latinx, Arab, multiracial or other relevant non-white background.”
 - “People of Colour Committee” - new definition: “**People of Colour Committee** means the committee of that name established in accordance with rule 67.”
 - “Students of Colour” – new definition: “**Students of Colour** means students who identify as people of colour due to their African, Asian, Pacific Islander, Aboriginal, Torres Strait Islander, Latinx, Arab, multiracial or other relevant non-white background.”
- R. 52 (0) [p.16]: add “*People of Colour Officer*”
- R. 67 (k) [p.21]: add “*People of Colour Committee*”
- R. 71.7 [p.22]: add “*The voting representatives of the People of Colour Committee are elected by enrolled students who are people of colour*” and renumber
- R. 72.2 [p.22]: add “*and People of Colour Committee*”
- R. 72.7 [p.23]: add “*The voting Representatives of the People of Colour Committee are elected from Members of UMSU who are People of Colour*” and renumber
- R. 78.1 (k) [p.24]: add “*People of Colour*” and renumber
- R. 87 [p. 26]: add new section 87 and renumber

PEOPLE OF COLOUR DEPARTMENT

The aims and objectives of the People of Colour department are:

(a) To ensure the interests of people of colour (students of colour) are effectively represented and advocated for in all aspects, operations and activities of UMSU and the University

(b) To oversee the activities, policies and direction of UMSU in areas related to the interests of students of colour

(c) To actively increase visibility and awareness about issues faced by students of colour at university

(d) To combat racist attitudes and expressions within UMSU, the University and the community

- (e) To initiate and coordinate campaigns in regards to the wellbeing of students of colour*
- (f) To provide support, information, advocacy and referral to support services and other relevant resources or organisations as required for students of colour*
- (g) To provide opportunities for community building for students of colour*
- (h) To recognise the diversity of experience between students of different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds*

- R. 93.2 [p.29]: add *“and People of Colour Committee”*
- R. 129.1 (j) [p.36]: add *“The Representative of the Students’ Council elected by People of Colour, the People of Colour Officer, the voting Representatives of the People of Colour Committee must be People of Colour”* and renumber.
- R. 130.5 [p.37]: add *“The Representative of the Students’ Council elected by People of Colour, the People of Colour Officer, and the voting Representatives of the People of Colour Committee are elected by People of Colour”* and renumber.
- R. 175.5 (e) [p.50]: add *“People of Colour Policy, where the view of the People of Colour committee prevails.”*

Rationale:

As an organisation which aims to represent all students, it is important that UMSU has the means to support students of colour, who face systematic disadvantage at all levels at university due to a number of barriers, including but not limited to racism and cultural barriers.

The best way to do this is through the creation of a People of Colour Department which will be able to advocate for the interests of students of colours and provide support services, in the same way that students are supported through other autonomous departments within UMSU. A People of Colour department will allow for autonomous campaigns on issues affecting students of colour to be run and for a community for students of colour to be established.

There is widespread support for a People of Colour Department to be established. It has been endorsed by the People of Colour Collective, run by the UMSU Welfare Department, and has had positive response in the Constitutional Feedback Survey. The petition in support of creating the department, run through the Welfare Department, received over 150 signatures.

The definition of ‘People of Colour’ as used in the proposed changes was developed by the People of Colour Collective, and keeps with its aims of supporting students who face systematic disadvantage due to their racial background. The collective saw it as the best definition for the students the department would seek to represent. The aims of the department were also developed and endorsed by the People of Colour Collective, with the objective of creating a department which is able to represent, support and advocate for students of colour.

3. Correction of MUOSS anachronism

Found under:

- Definition of “International Student Department” [p.3]

Current:

International Student Department means the department established in accordance with *rule 148* this department is known as *MUOSS*.

Proposed:

International Student Department means the department established in accordance with *rule 149* this department is known as *UMSU International*.

Rationale:

MUOSS is now known as UMSU International and the constitution should be amended to reflect this. The change in numbering would result from the potential introduction of a People of Colour department under R. 87.

4. Updating the definition of “Woman”

Found under:

- Definition of “Woman” [p. 5]

Current:

Woman means a person who identifies as a woman *as evidenced in the enrolment records of the university*

Proposed:

Woman means a person who identifies as a Woman *regardless of gender assigned at birth, including but not limited to trans women, cis women and intersex women.*

Rationale:

- The current definition of Woman is exclusionary of Trans Women
- Better representation of Women students that is inclusive of Trans Women
- Under the current definition people whose enrolment records do not state ‘female’ cannot run for Women’s officer, Committee or be a member of collective

5. Introduction of a Students of Colour representative on Student’s Council

Found under:

- R. 49.1 (a) [p.15]

Current:

42.1 *The Students’ Council consists of:*

(a) *the following eighteen voting Representatives:*

(i) *one Representative elected by each of the following constituencies:*

(a) *Queer Students*

(b) *Indigenous Students*

(c) *International Students*

(d) *Graduate Students*

(e) *Students with Disabilities*

Proposed:

42.2 *The Students' Council consists of:*

- (a) *the following ~~eighteen~~ **twenty one** voting Representatives:*
- (i) *one Representative elected by each of the following constituencies:*
 - (a) *Queer Students*
 - (b) *Indigenous Students*
 - (c) *International Students*
 - (d) *Graduate Students*
 - (e) *Students with Disabilities*
- Add:** (f) *Students of Colour*

Rationale:

Each autonomous department has a corresponding voting representative on Students' Council (excepting the Women's department which is represented through affirmative action). It would be inconsistent not to include a representative for students of colour following the introduction of a People of Colour department.

6. Affirmative action for women of colour in the Women's Department

Found under:

- Definitions [p. 5]
- R. 55 [p. 16]
- R. 68 [p. 21]
- R. 129.1 (e) [p. 36]
- R. 131.2 (c) [p. 38]

Current:

There is currently no affirmative action for women of colour in the women's department.

Proposed:

- Definitions: add "**Woman of Colour** means those who identify as being both a woman and a person of colour"
- 55.3: Add and renumber "If more than one person holds the office of Women's Officer, one of them must be a Woman of Colour"
- 68: Add "women's committee"
- 68 (e): add
The Women's Committee consists of:
 - (i) *seven voting representatives, of whom at least three must be women of colour. If at least three candidates for the Committee are not women of colour, those places not filled by women of colour may be filled by other women.*
 - (ii) *the relevant Officer or Officers as a non-voting Representative; and*
 - (iii) *not more than three additional non-voting Representatives co-opted by the Committee*

- 129.1: Add (e) *“If the position of Women’s Officer is held jointly, at least one of the persons holding the position must be a Woman of Colour”* and renumber.
- 131.2: Add (c) *“three voting representatives of the Women’s Committee must be members of UMSU who are Women of Colour. If there are insufficient Women of Colour candidates to satisfy this requirement, any shortfall may be made up by women members who are not Women of Colour.”*

Rationale:

- Leadership from white women in the department is not representative of the university population
- White women often speak over women of colour, who face multifaceted challenges incomprehensible to white women
- Women of Colour Collective – having two white women’s officers means that students have to run the collective, which is not only impractical but means that students are running collectives that they are not been receiving an honoraria to run
- Historically, women of colour have not been represented in the department despite Women of Colour making up a large part of Women students in the University population

7. Introducing affirmative action for joint OB positions

Found under:

- R. 55 [p.16]
- R. 129.1 (f) [p.36]

Current:

There is currently no affirmative action provision for office bearer positions.

Proposed:

Add 55.4 *“If more than one person holds any other office, one of them must be a Woman”* and renumber.

Add 129.1 (f) *“If any other officer position is held jointly, at least one of the persons holding the position must be a woman.”*

Rationale:

- Women should be represented across all UMSU departments

8. Strengthening AA in multi-member ballots

Found under:

- R. 49.1 (a) (ii) [p.15]
- R. 68 (a), (d) [p. 21]
- R. 69, 70 [p.22]
- R. 131.2 (a), (b) [p.37]

Current:

R. 49.1 mandates that 7 out of 8 representatives on Students' Council be women.

R. 68 mandates that 3 out of 7 representatives must be women on committees except for VCA, Burnley committees. There is currently no AA requirement for the VCA and Burnley committees under R. 69 & 70.

R.131.2 reiterates the R.49.1 and R.68 while contradicting R. 69 & 70 by stating:

131.2 At least:

(a) *seven eight general Representatives of the Students' Council; and*

(b) *three four voting Representatives of each Committee,*

must be Members of UMSU who are Women. If there are insufficient Women candidates to satisfy this requirement, any shortfall may be made up by Members who are not Women

Proposed:

49.1 (a) (ii): *Fifteen general Representatives elected by all Students, of whom at least ~~seven~~ eight must be Women. If at least ~~seven~~ eight candidates for election are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by any other Member*

68 (a): *seven voting Representatives, of whom at least ~~three~~ four must be Women. If at least ~~three~~ four candidates for each Committee are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by other candidates;*

68 (d) (i): *seven voting Representatives, of whom at least ~~three~~ four must be Women. If at least ~~three~~ four candidates for ~~the each~~ Committee are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by other candidates;*

69 (d): *Seven General Representatives, of whom at least four must be Women. If at least four candidates for each Committee are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by other candidates;*

70 (b): *Seven (7) general representatives, of whom at least four must be Women. If at least four candidates for each Committee are not Women, those places not filled by Women may be filled by other candidates;*

131.2: (a) *~~seven-eight~~ general Representatives of the Students' Council; and*

(b) *~~three four~~ voting Representatives of each Committee,*

Rationale:

- Ensures that Women are better represented on both students council and committees, which we should be aiming for as student representative body
- The current model is 50% minus, these changes would be 50% plus
- Women students make up the majority of students at the University of Melbourne, with the most current available stats showing that women make up 55% of enrolment, thus change is needed to allow for a more accurate representation of student population

